

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1 to 8 and replace with
Claims 9 to 16:

a1
~~Sub 81~~ --9. A process for the production of plants with improved growth characteristics which comprises the following steps:

- a. transfer and integration of a DNA sequence coding for a prokaryotic asparagine synthetase in the plant genome
 - b. wherein said DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts and/or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell expresses the asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts and/or plastids and
 - c. regeneration of intact and fertile plants from the transformed cells.
10. A plant cell wherein a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase is expressed in its chloroplasts and plastids.

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Acnt.

11. A plant cell according to claim 10 which contains a gene construct which provides a reduced level of expression of endogenous glutamine synthetase activity.

12. A plant, seeds and propagation material containing cells in claim 10.

13. A gene construct comprising a gene encoding a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase operatively linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts and/or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell expresses the asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts and/or plastids.

14. A gene construct according to claim 13, wherein the asparagine synthetase gene is an E. coli asparagine synthetase gene with a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus.

Sub B 15. A vector containing a gene construct according to claim 13 which gene construct comprises a sequence which encodes a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus.

16. A plant cell transformed with the gene construct according to claim 13 or with vector according to claim 15.--